




The Guardian - News - Local


Article

 Print |
  Send to a friend |
  Comment (0)

 A  A

A new take on going for a long walk

Published on August 31, 2012

Steve Sharratt 

 Recommend 13 |
  Tweet 0 |
  +1 0

Topics : [Confederation Trail](#) , [Newfoundland](#) , [WOOD ISLANDS](#) , [Prince Edward Island](#)

WOOD ISLANDS — Prince Edward Island is one of the friendliest places in North America according to a man who has walked here from Florida.

Warren Renninger hates to say good bye to the Island, but he's pushing on for Cape Breton and Newfoundland over the weekend as he continues a walk that has eaten up four pairs of sneakers and will take an entire year to complete.

"This is such a hospitable place," he said, sipping a coffee at the Plow the Waves Centre Friday.

"The only place close to it is Alabama.....that's where they actually have signs at the state border warning walkers they may be invited home for dinner."

While most people think twice about walking to the store, Renninger has logged in an astounding 7,000 kilometres since leaving the Keys of the Sunshine State last November.

Since then he's walked the Appalachian Trail and continued into Canada on what hikers call the International Trail. He expects to conclude his walk by reaching Lance Aux Meadows in northern Newfoundland in late October. Then he'll head home to his native Pennsylvania where he left on Nov. 7, 2011.

There were a few ferry rides and bus detours to stick with the trail, but today the 55-year-old hiker marks the 300th day of his amazing march through the eastern seaboard of North America.

He's been down back roads and bogs and through marshes and mountains and it's been the best experience of his life. He still has another 1,000 kilometres to complete Newfoundland.

"I'm a little tired right now because it's hard to keep up your protein levels," he said, 25 pounds lighter than when he began. "You can have a big meal, but you burn it off in no time."

A former tech worker who was downsized four years ago, this isn't his first stroll through the meadow. He did his first Appalachian Trail hike in 1998 and again in 2008. He's also done the Pacific Trail and the Lewis and Clark Trail through the Rockies. All in all, that works out to about 21,000 kilometres — or the equivalent of walking from Vancouver to St. John's three times.

"I do it because I love being outside and doing something," he smiles sipping the cup of java that works into his \$10 to \$15 dollar a day budget. "Plus it's a lifestyle...it just becomes a way of life to see the world from places few others do and to meet the people that go with it."

Whether it's a basin in the Rockies where First Nation people built a community or a pass in the Rockies where Meriwether Lewis first charted a map, Renninger says it becomes a passion.

It all began with a book called Ten Millions Steps. When he read the travels of Nimble Will Nomad (hikers adopt handles like long haul truckers), Renninger was hooked and, being single with no kids, he hasn't looked back. He travels simply, with nothing more than a backpack filled with food, clothes and a tent — plus walking sticks.

In south Florida he was yelled at by passing cars who thought he was homeless, and then yelled at by homeless people who thought he was moving in on their space. He quickly learned to tell store owners that he was hiking the trails to diffuse any tensions in larger urban centres.

"I've met some great people here," he said. "Two conservation guys came by on an ATV and when they found out what I was doing they were making sure I had their phone numbers and offers of assistance if I needed anything."

Renninger usually needs little, but he's grateful for dinner invites and places to stay just to enjoy a change from his tent and to have some hearty conversation. He's staying at the Northumberland Park before taking the Wood Islands ferry at 8 a.m. this morning and goes by the name of Lakeland Nidhatak when he blogs on the website Trail Journals.

One recent entry; "went to Denis Dunn's house (near Charlottetown) where he and his wife Sharon cooked dinner for me. Had corn-on-the-cob, baked potatoes, and thick and delicious pork chops...I was full!"

He cites a number of Islanders who have reached out to help during his trip, including Leo Gill of Island Trails, who helped with some lodging and directions when he took a wrong turn on the Confederation Trail. He even got a free ride over the Confederation Bridge when the shuttle driver heard his tale.

There's still Cape Breton and Newfoundland to go, but the wonder walker is already contemplating the big kahuna when it comes to trail walking. That's the continuation of the International Trail through Greenland and Iceland and through Europe to Morocco. But that's for another day.



Guardian photo by Steve Sharratt

Warren Renninger soaks up some rest in Wood Islands before continuing his walk from Florida to Newfoundland.



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO SERVE YOU BETTER

Connolly Financial Group

Life Insurance Planning	
Group Insurance	Living Benefits
Investment Solutions	Partnership Programs